



## WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH IN NORTH DAKOTA

*From The  
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health*



### State Profile 2002

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*Delivering on the Nation's promise:  
Safety and health at work for all people through prevention.*

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### The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

NIOSH is the primary federal agency responsible for conducting research and making recommendations for the prevention of work-related illness and injury. NIOSH is located in the Department of Health and Human Services in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The NIOSH mission is to provide national and world leadership to prevent work-related illness, injury, disability, and death by gathering information, conducting scientific research, and translating the knowledge gained into products and services. As part of its mission, NIOSH supports programs in every state to improve the health and safety of workers. NIOSH has developed this document to highlight recent NIOSH programs important to workers and employers in North Dakota.

### The Burden of Occupational Illness and Injury in North Dakota

- In North Dakota, there are approximately 329,000 individuals employed in the workforce.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2000, 34 workers died as a result of workplace injuries.<sup>2</sup>
- The agriculture, forestry, and fishing industry had the highest number of fatalities, followed by construction.<sup>2</sup>
- In 1999, the most recent year for which data are available, the rate of fatal workplace injuries was 6.8 deaths per 100,000 workers – above the national average rate of 4.5 deaths per 100,000 workers.<sup>3</sup>

### The Cost of Occupational Injury and Illness in North Dakota

In 2000, the most recent year for which data are available, a total of \$85.8 million was paid for workers' compensation claims by North Dakota private insurers and state funds.<sup>4</sup> This figure does not include compensation paid to workers employed by the federal government and also underestimates the total financial burden for private sector businesses, since only a fraction of health care costs and earnings lost through work injuries and illnesses is covered by workers' compensation. Chronic occupational illnesses like cancer are substantially under-reported in workers' compensation systems because work-relatedness is often difficult to establish.

# How NIOSH Prevents Worker Injuries and Diseases in North Dakota

## Health Hazard Evaluations (HHEs) and Technical Assistance

NIOSH evaluates workplace hazards and recommends solutions when requested by employers, workers, or state or federal agencies. Since 1993, NIOSH has responded to 11 requests for HHEs in North Dakota in a variety of industrial settings, including the following examples:

### ***Grafton, North Dakota: Evaluation of Indoor Environmental Quality at State Building***

In 2000, NIOSH responded to an employee request for an HHE at the North Dakota State Developmental Center in Grafton, North Dakota. The requestor expressed concerns that poor air circulation, visible mold growth in the ventilation ducts, and the presence of mice or rats possibly were causing health problems including sinus headaches, migraines, allergic reactions, colds, flu, and other respiratory irritations. NIOSH arranged for the Risk Manager in the state's Department of Human Services to perform an indoor environmental quality evaluation of the building. In addition, NIOSH provided a NIOSH document with practical guidance on preventing, identifying, and correcting indoor air quality problems and another NIOSH document that includes specific recommendations regarding mold and microbial growth problems and ventilation deficiencies.

### ***Grand Forks, North Dakota: Indoor Environmental Quality Assessment Following Flood***

In 1997, NIOSH responded to a request by the Indian Health Service (IHS) to assist in evaluating the indoor environmental quality of approximately 70 public buildings subsequent to flood damage and prior to occupancy. IHS was responding to a request from the Office of Emergency Preparedness in Grand Forks, North Dakota, following the flood of 1997. NIOSH investigators provided guidance on the evaluation, cleaning, disinfection, and re-starting of heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning systems. In addition, NIOSH provided guidance on appropriate personal protective equipment for workers in the various sites, analyzed bulk samples submitted by the regional U.S. Environmental Protection Agency office, and provided a training seminar attended by city, county, and state public health officials.

*Additional information regarding NIOSH services and activities can be accessed through the NIOSH home page at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html> or by calling the NIOSH 800-number at 1-800-356-NIOSH (1-800-356-4674).*

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Current Population Survey, 2000.

<sup>2</sup>DOL, BLS in cooperation with state and federal agencies, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 1999-2000.

<sup>3</sup>National Academy of Social Insurance, *Workers' Compensation: Benefits, Coverage, and Costs, 2000 New Estimates*, May 2002.

